



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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FB13-030

## **NOAA Seeks Comments on an Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit for a Pilot Study by Gulf of Mexico Headboats Evaluating an Allocation-Based Management System**

NOAA Fisheries is accepting comments on an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from the Gulf Headboat Cooperative (Cooperative). The Cooperative proposes to evaluate the efficiency of an allocation-based management system, using a limited number of headboats in a 2-year pilot study.

This study, to be conducted in the Gulf of Mexico, is intended to assess whether such a system can better achieve conservation goals established in the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico; evaluate the effectiveness of a more timely electronic data reporting system; and evaluate the potential social and economic benefits of an alternative management strategy for the headboat segment of the recreational fishing sector within the Gulf reef fish fishery.

### **Dates:**

Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time, on **May 2, 2013**.

### **Addresses:**

You may submit comments on the application, identified by RIN 0648-XC528, by any of the following methods:

- **E-mail:** 0648-XC528.Headboat.IFQ.EFP@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail the following document identifier: "Headboat IFQ".
- **Mail:** Steve Branstetter, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

This bulletin only provides an overview of the EFP application. Interested parties are encouraged to review the entire application at [Headboat EFP](#).

For additional information, Contact Steve Branstetter, 727-824-5305; e-mail: [Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov](mailto:Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov).

### **Program Concept**

The Cooperative is requesting an EFP authorizing their members to harvest a specific amount of red snapper and gag anytime during the 2014 and 2015 fishing years. Their

allocation would be based on the Cooperative participants' 2011 aggregate landings of red snapper and gag as percentage of the total landings in that year for both species. That percentage would then be applied to the 2014 and 2015 red snapper recreational quota and gag recreational allowable catch to determine the amount of fish authorized for harvest under the permit. The Cooperative would be responsible for distributing the allotted fish to the participants, and for reporting their landings electronically to NOAA Fisheries.

All vessels in the program would be required to purchase, install, activate, and maintain a Vessel Monitoring System. A participating captain would "hail out" as the vessel leaves the dock, and "hail in" at least one hour prior to landing, alerting law enforcement and port agents to his/her return. Landings would be reported at the end of the trip using a software application (*iSnapper*) developed by Texas A&M University's Harte Research Institute, and each fisherman would be provided with a written record of their catch.

Academic researchers, in collaboration with the Cooperative, would conduct a socio-economic study of the anticipated effects of the change in headboat cooperative management using currently available data sources. Simultaneously, the academic researchers and the Cooperative would develop additional survey instruments to gather economic data for an analysis of the effects of the pilot project on Cooperative vessels after its first and second years. Data collection would emphasize impacts of the pilot project.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) reviewed the Cooperative's initial application at its April 2012 meeting, and recommended that NOAA Fisheries approve the application. NOAA Fisheries finds this application does warrant further consideration, and is seeking public comment on the application. A final decision on issuance of the EFP will depend on NOAA Fisheries' review of public comments received, the Council's recommendation, consultations with the affected states, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as a determination that it is consistent with all applicable laws.